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ABSTRACT

An evaluative approach for assessing the performance of administrators is presented. The process includes a peer and client review process, traditional review by superiors, and some aspects of management by objectives (MBO). Nine steps for implementing the evaluation program are outlined. A flow chart explaining traditional (superior-subordinate) evaluation following the MBO model is presented and modifications that integrate other approaches are explained. It is suggested that administrator evaluation be treated as an ongoing process of generating management information that can be used to improve organizational performance. A continuous flow of administrative performance, feedback, goal setting, validation of goals, and evaluation is recommended and illustrated. (Author/SF)

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"The Assessment of Administrative Performance in Colleges and Universities"

by

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ABSTRACT

Increasingly constrained budgets and governmental requirements for accountability have increased pressure on colleges and universities to develop effective measures of outcomes, including the effectiveness of administrative performance. This article discusses several alternatives, for assessing the performance of administrators, including the MBO model, and presents a three level model of the evaluation of administrative performance. The model includes elements of both management by objectives and a process behavioral approach which allows the use of outcome measures.

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"The Assessment of Administrative Performance
in Colleges and Universities"

There is now evidence of an increasing acceptance by faculty members for the evaluation of their performance within the academic setting. It has, of course, been a long standing tradition to participate in a peer review process. More recently, evaluation of course materials and teaching competencies by students has become more widespread.

There is no parallel to this kind of evaluation for the administration of our colleges and universities. This paper suggest an evaluative approach for administrative personnel which includes a peer and client review process, as well as the traditional review-by-superiors. It incorporates some aspects of management-by-objectives (MBO) and places major responsibility for the assessment on the administrator-evaluatee, in accordance with modern management principles (cf. Boston, 1972: E.R.S., 1974; Likert, 1967; Lowin and Craig, 1968; Mansergh, 1971).

We begin with the generally accepted dichotomy between evaluation as as end in itself and evaluation as a means to facilitate the attainment of other objectives within the organization. In the former case, evaluation is usually perceived as judgemental - its major use is in justifying salary decisions, job assignments and promotions or firings. The latter view treats evaluation as an on-going process of generating management information which is then used by the evaluatee to improve organizational performance.

> Evaluation is an integral part of the total management system and is interrelated with decision making, resource allocation, goal development, and other administrative functions. (E.R.S., 1974,p.3).

The approach to administrative performance evaluation proposed herein follows this latter theme.

In proposing any evaluation/assessment paradigm for administrative personnel, one must make certain tacit assumptions from which the evaluation scheme then flows. Following the scheme suggested, these assumptions are:

1) That there is a set of standards of administrative performance which is definable.

2) That these standards can be operationalized in such a way that it is possible to measure performance in terms of the standards.

3) That there is a correlation (positive) between the process of assessment and attainment of one or more of the goals of the organization.

(This last assumption is particularly interesting when interpreted to mean that the organization has goals and has set a priority on the attainment of them such that the achievement of an internal goal, such as personnel assessment, should not be achieved at the expense of a higher order goal (e.g. effective teaching and research).

It follows from these assumptions that the development of an evaluative process requires:

1) The development of a set of operational standards of administrative effectiveness

2) Implementation of the assessment procedures

3) Evidence of positive benefits from the assessment process contributing to the accomplishment of institutional goals.

Dean Speicher (March 1971, p.9) has identified three approaches to the development of measure of administrative effectiveness:

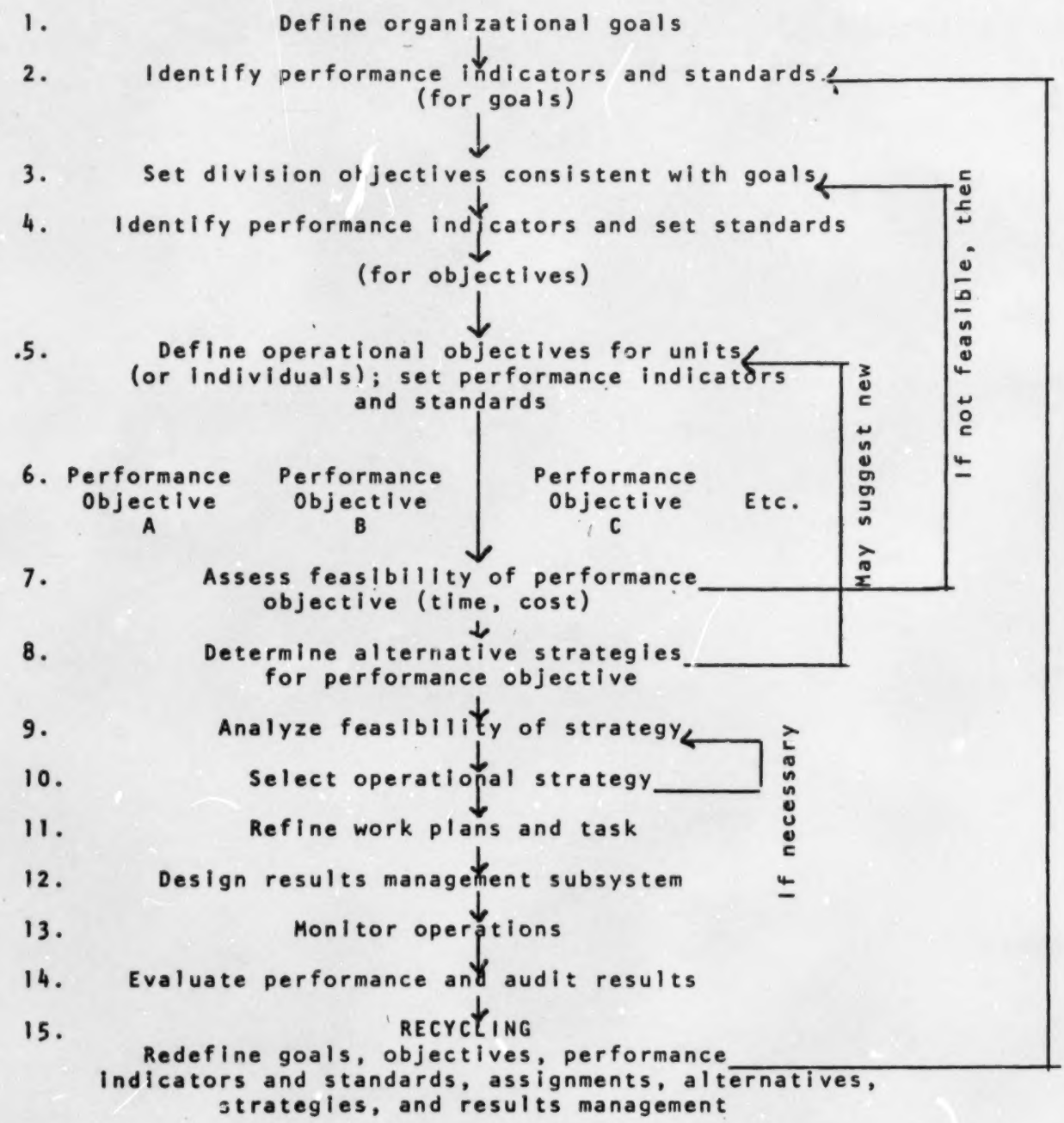
1) "The Characteristics of Traits Approach" which focuses on the personal attributes of the effective administrator as identified by various researchers and writers on personality theory, motivation, and organizational behavior (cf. Lawrence and Lorsch, 1969; McGregor, 1960; Maslow, 1965, 1970).
2) "The Process Behavior Approach" which attempts to identify specific functions of the administrator and to assess performance based on how well these functions are fulfilled; based on the concepts of "scientific management" such that administrative performance can be partitioned into discrete activities.
3) "The Administrative Outcomes Approach" which utilizes an output model of productivity to measure relative accomplishment of a set of objectives; MBO is an example of this approach.

The methodology proposed herein draws upon certain aspects of each of the above approaches and favors most heavily the Outcomes Approach.

The traditional superior-subordinate administrative assessment system, with minor modifications, follows the outline of the MBO process shown in figure 1. The modification proposed allows for both objective and subjective evaluation of administrative performance; that is, the 'performance objectives' need not be operationally stated. Where possible, however, such operational definition of output objectives is encouraged.

FIGURE 1

The MBO Model

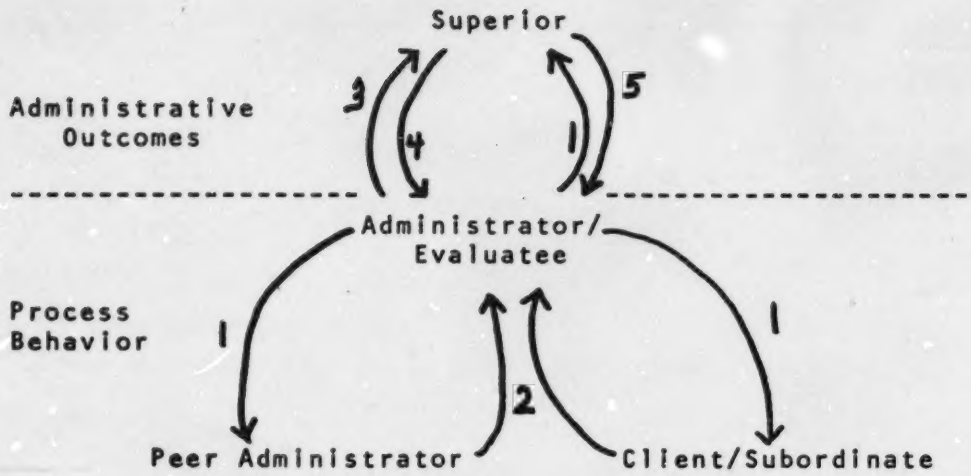

1. Define organizational goals
2. Identify performance indicators and standards (for goals)
3. Set division objectives consistent with goals
4. Identify performance indicators and set standards (for objectives)
5. Define operational objectives for units (or individuals); set performance indicators and standards
6. Performance Objective A
Performance Objective B
Performance Objective C
Etc.
7. Assess feasibility of performance objective (time, cost)
8. Determine alternative strategies for performance objective
9. Analyze feasibility of strategy
10. Select operational strategy
11. Refine work plans and task
12. Design results management subsystem
13. Monitor operations
14. Evaluate performance and audit results
15. RECYCLING
Redefine goals, objectives, performance indicators and standards, assignments, alternatives, strategies, and results management
If not feasible, then
May suggest new
If necessary

SOURCE: Knezevich, Stephen J. Management by Objectives and Results--A Guidebook for Today's School Executive. Arlington, Virginia: American Association of School Administrators, 1973. p. 27.

A second major modification is that assessment by both superiors, peers, and subordinates is also suggested. In the traditional MBO scheme, the assessment is conducted between the supervisor (evaluator) and the subordinate (evaluatee). In this instance, it is proposed that this traditional process be augmented by the evaluatee identifying a "client" or subordinate population and a population of peer administrators from which to solicit formal feedback on administrative performance. This results in a three level evaluative process which includes clients, peers, and superiors.

When implemented, the resulting evaluation procedures combine the Administrative Outcomes, as represented by the traditional superior-subordinate MBO model, and a Process Behavior Approach at the Client-Peer Levels. The continuous flow of administrative performance, feedback, goal setting, validation of goals and evaluation by the superior is illustrated in Figure II.

FIGURE II



1. Administrative Action by the Evaluatee
2. Feedback
3. Goal Setting
4. Validation of Goals
5. Evaluation of Goal Attainment

"Flow Diagram of the Administrative Performance Assessment Model"

In order to elicit feedback from the three populations, several alternatives exist. As summarized by the Educational Research Service Inc. (1974, p.11), they are:

1. Graphic rating scales - The administrator is evaluated according to how frequently a quality or behavior is observed, or by how accurately a statement describes the administrator. Instruments of this type include:

   The Managerial Grid Scale of Blake and Mouton (1964)

   The Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire - Form XII developed by Stogdill (1963)

   Disadvantages of such scales include the tendency of the rater to over-generalize favorably or unfavorably (halo effect).

2. Essay Appraisals - the evaluator writes a narrative appraisal of the administrator discussing strengths, weaknesses, potential, and other observations.

3. Field Review - when reliable and/or comparable evaluations are desired, essay and graphic ratings by several evaluators can be combined through a systematic review process.

4. Forced Choice Rating - evaluators must choose from two or more statements the one that best or least describes the administrator.

5. Critical Incident Appraisal - administrative behavior is recorded either at critical periods or when significant incidents, positive or negative, occur. This procedure requires frequent, critical observations and recordings of administrative behavior or decisions. Because of this, it may appear excessively autocratic in character.

Our suggestion has elements of each of these approaches; perhaps most accurately characterized as a combination of Essay Appraisal and Forced Choice Rating of the evaluatee by a client and peer population selected by the evaluatee. This is then complemented by Field Review by the evaluatee's supervisor based on a pre-established set of objectives following the MBO approach.

For client and peer review, the evaluatee must identify a client

population and a peer-group population. When identified, feedback on administrative performance is solicited in one or more generic areas of administrative performance using a forced-choice format, such as the Wellesley system shown in Figure III, accompanied by a copy of the job description and a form on which to respond with additional essay comments, if desired by the evaluator. The results of the evaluation by members of the group may be pooled for the group, if desired, after being returned to the evaluatee.

The supervisor/evaluator is normally that person designated by the organization hierarchy. Here the evaluation process follows the traditional MBO approach following the assumptions outlined by the Educational Research Service (1974, p.16):

1) The focus of the evaluation should be on continuous growth and improvement;

2) priorities must be set so that the most important responsibilities will be evaluated;

3) lack of defined priorities result in a dissapation of resources;

4) the administrator and supervisor may have different perceptions of administrative responsibilities unless they are specified and

5) dialogue between the administrator and supervisor concerning agreed upon priorities are productive both to the efficiency of the organization and to the psychological well being of the individual.

The result of this three-level evaluative process is a variety of data on administrative performance. The reliability of the data from the peer and client groups is relatively high since the number of persons is large and the results can be pooled. Subjective judgements may be included, as well as objective data based on output data derived through the MBO process. This feedback from a

FIGURE III

WELLESLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Unit B Personnel
Grid for Indicators of Performance

	Outstanding	Superior	Above Average	Average	Below Average
LEADERSHIP planning, follow-through, initiative, organization, decision making	Effective planned change is constantly observable. Develops plans and strategies independently. Organizational skills are clearly evident.	Planning prior to decision making, follow-up and superior organizational skills are observable. Decision making process is clearly understood by all concerned.	Can be counted on to develop plans and strategies with some direction. Some organizational skills are understood and articulated.	Adequate organizational skills are demonstrated. Effectively meets day to day objectives.	
KNOWLEDGE	Often acts as a resource person. Displays thorough knowledge of field. Introduces, innovates & implements changes & trends.	Thorough knowledge of field and performs accordingly.	Maintains current knowledge of latest developments.	Good understanding of field.	
COMMUNICATION	The communication process is thoroughly understood as seen in the great degree of involvement. Democratic processes are adhered to.	Two-way communication process is practiced with staff/students/parents.	All parties concerned are well-informed.	Organizational and/or department objectives are understood.	
HUMAN RELATIONS	Collaborates with staff, achieves & maintains high morale. Stimulates effective interaction.	Staff works with purpose & commitment. Interaction evident.	Staff seems to work in harmony.	Staff shows fair amount of commitment.	
GOALS	Is successfully realizing all short range goals. Long range goals are progressing well.	Most short range goals completed. Long range goals progressing well.	Short range goals in various stages of completion. Long range goals identified.	Short range goals in various stages of completion.	
JOB DESCRIPTION	Excels in all phases of job description.	Performs beyond job description parameters.	Performs well according to the job description.	Strives to meet job description.	

Source: E.R.S., 1974, p. 117.

variety of sources provides for a more balanced treatment of the administrative assessment process, than is typically the case.

In summary, the steps required to implement such a program of administrative evaluation are:

1. Review and/or prepare job descriptions for each administrator to be evaluated.

2. Select a rating system based on generic performance areas, such as the Wellesley grid shown in figure III.

3. Design a response form corresponding to the grid and including opportunity for subjective comment and/or suggestions.
   a. For client level responses
   b. For Peer Level responses
   c. For superior level responses (optional)

4. Each administrator prepares a 'client' and peer list of persons to receive evaluation materials.

5. Evaluation materials distributed (instructions, grid, response form, and job description).

6. MBO process initiated with superior following procedures outlined in Figure I.

7. Written feedback from client and peer review received by evaluatee.

8. Evaluatee does analysis and synthesis of client and peer feedback for incorporation in MBO plan.

9. Personal goals and goals based on client and peer feedback discussed with superior and included in MBO process.

This plan for administrative performance evaluation was developed in the Fall of 1975 for use as a part of the Management Information System designed by the author for Canisius College, Buffalo, New York. The system has since been implemented on a limited scale as a part of a developmental process. The results from the initial implementation are encouraging. Comments by administrator/evaluatees tend to confirm the utility of such formalized feedback on performance from client and peer groupings. No major difficulties have been encountered to date and the system has successfully incorporated differences in administrative categories (e.g. academic administration, as well as financial administration, alumni relations, etc.). Evaluative studies are planned over the next three years to determine the contribution of the evaluative system to administrative performance, it being premature to do more than speculate on the probably effects of the sytem.

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